AMAR CHITRA KATHA

No.130

Garuda

AMAR CHITRA KATHA



Garuda is a mythical bird and has been held in great veneration in India from time immemorial. Many Indologists hold that this deity is of Dravidian origin.

A stone flag-post, often covered with metal plate, with an image of Garuda on top, is invariably erected in front of the image of the Deity in all Vaishnavaite temples. Besides this, another huge idol of Garuda is often installed in most Vaishnavaite temples, as he is considered to be one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu. During the Gupta age, which is referred to as the golden era of Indian History, the Imperial standard had a Garuda image on it.

Garuda is represented as a large white-necked eagle, but his images in the temples show him with a human trunk. Serpents are the natural food of the eagle. The reason for this enmity is traced in the Adi Parva of the Mahabharc to the jealousy between Kadru and Vinata, the mother _ the serpents and Garuda respectively.

Only Vishnu could have these two born enemies – Garuda, the mighty eagle and Shesha, the great serpent – wait upon him. He uses Shesha as the couch and Garuda as the mount.

Our next title:

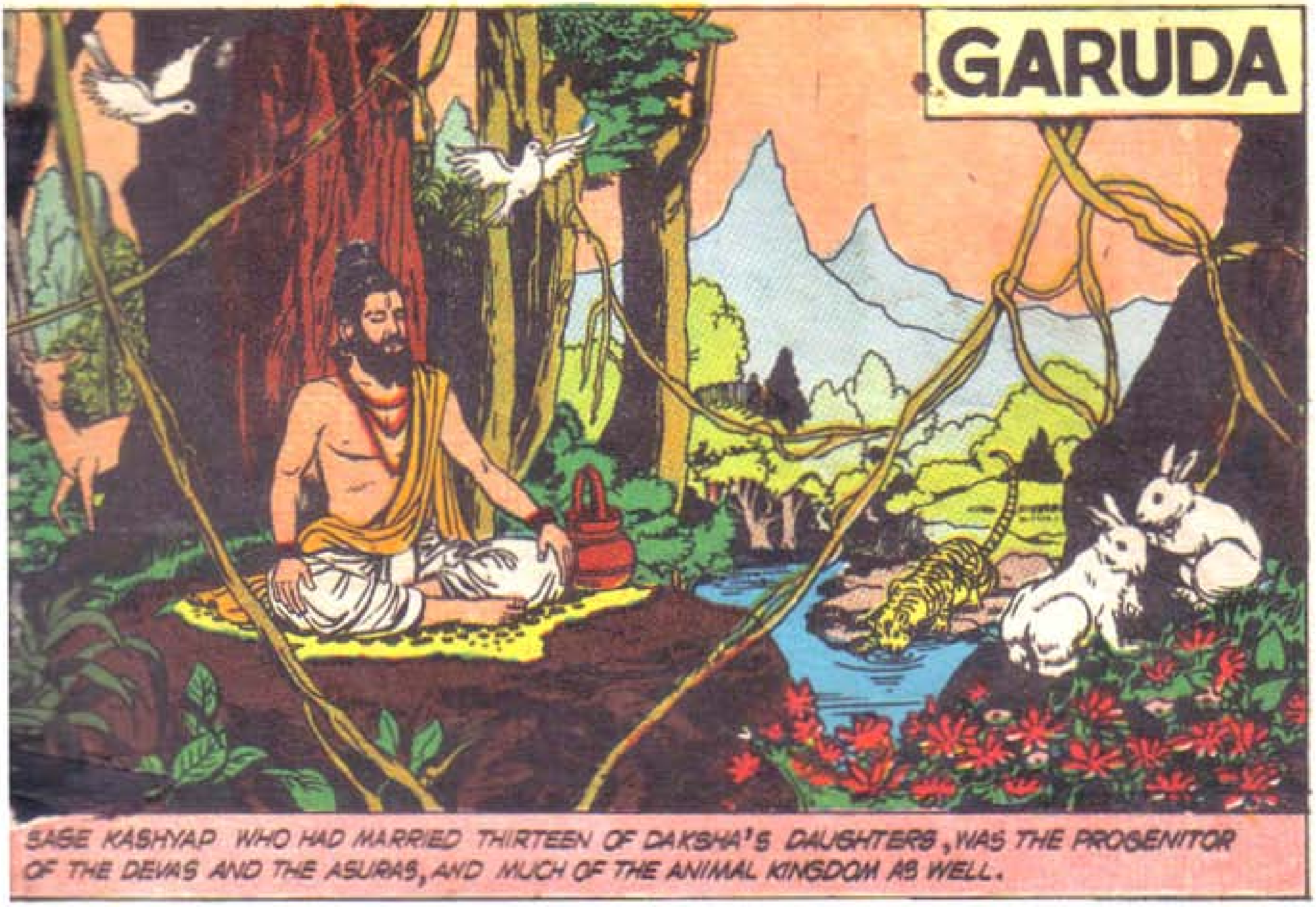
BIRBAL THE WISE

Published by H.G. Mirchandani for India Book House Education Trust, 29, Wodehouse Road, Bombay 400 039 and printed by H.K. Nasta at, IBH Printers, Marol Naka, Mathuradas Vissanji Road, Andheri (East), Bombay - 400 059.

Editor: Anant Pai **Associate Editor: Kamala Chandrakant**

Script: Kamala Chandrakant **Illustrations: C. M. Vitankar**

First Printing: March 1977







*THE SACRIFICE.


SO BE IT.
AND KASHYAP WENT AWAY TO PREPARE FOR THE YAGNA.
HIS SON, INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS, CAME WITH THE DIMINUTIVE VALKHILYA RISHIS AND OTHER CELESTIAL BEINGS TO ASSIST HIM.
GO WITH THE RISHIS AND FETCH THE FUEL FOR THE SACRIFICIAL FIRE.
A LITTLE LATER, AS INDRA FLEW BACK CARRYING A HEAVY LOG SINGLE-HANDED —
LOOK AT THOSE PUNY RISHIS STRUGGLING WITH A MERE TWIG!
HA! HA! HA! HO! HO! HO!
HIS PRIDE MUST BE HUMBLED.


SO, LATER, AS THE SACRIFICIAL FIRE BLAZED FORTH WITH THE CONSECRATING GHEE —
BY THE FRUIT OF OUR PENANCES MAY ANOTHER INDRA BE BORN— MIGHTIER THAN THE PRESENT ONE!
LET HIM BE CAPABLE OF GOING ANYWHERE AT WILL, OF MUSTERING ANY MEASURE OF STRENGTH AT WILL, AND OF ASSUMING ANY FORM AT WILL.
I'D BETTER ASK MY FATHER TO INTERCEDE WITH THE RISHIS ON MY BEHALF.
O VENERABLE ONE, YOU MUST SAVE ME FROM THE WRATH OF THE RISHIS.
AFTER HEARING THE WHOLE STORY, KASHYAP SPOKE TO THE RISHIS.
O HOLY ONES, THE PRESENT INDRA HAS BEEN APPOINTED LORD OF THE HEAVENS BY BRAHMA. LET THE INDRA YOU CREATE BE LORD OF THE WINGED CREATURES. BE GRACIOUS TO HIM WHO BOWS BEFORE YOU.


THE RISHIS RELENTED.
SO BE IT. SINCE THIS YAGNA IS FOR OFFSPRING FOR YOU, ACCEPT THE FRUIT OF OUR ACTIONS.
WHEN THE YAGNA WAS OVER, KASHYAP RETURNED TO VINATA AND KADRU.
YOU SHALL SOON BE THE MOTHERS OF THE SONS YOU DESIRE.
AND KASHYAP RETURNED TO THE FOREST AND HIS MEDITATION.
MONTHS LATER, VINATA BROUGHT FORTH TWO EGGS AND KADRU, A THOUSAND.
LET US HAVE THEM INCUBATED SEPARATELY IN WARM VESSELS.
YEARS ROLLED BY. THE MOTHERS WAITED ANXIOUSLY FOR THE EGGS TO HATCH. THEN ONE DAY —
O VINATA, MY SONS HAVE BURST OPEN THEIR SHELLS! COME. SEE THEM.


WHAT ABOUT MINE?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW?
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HER LIFE, VINATA FELT THE PANGS OF JEALOUSY. SHE BECAME IMPATIENT.
I'LL BREAK OPEN ONE OF THEM. PERHAPS MY SONS NEED HELP.
SO SHE BROKE OPEN ONE OF THE EGGS. TO HER HORROR, THE LOWER HALF OF THE CHILD INSIDE WAS A LUMP OF FLESH.
ALAS! WHAT HAVE I DONE!
THE CHILD POINTED AN ACCUSING FINGER AT HER.
YOU SHALL PAY FOR YOUR IMPATIENCE WITH SLAVERY. BUT IF YOU CAN BE MORE PATIENT WITH THE OTHER EGG, MY BROTHER WILL DELIVER YOU FROM YOUR BONDAGE.

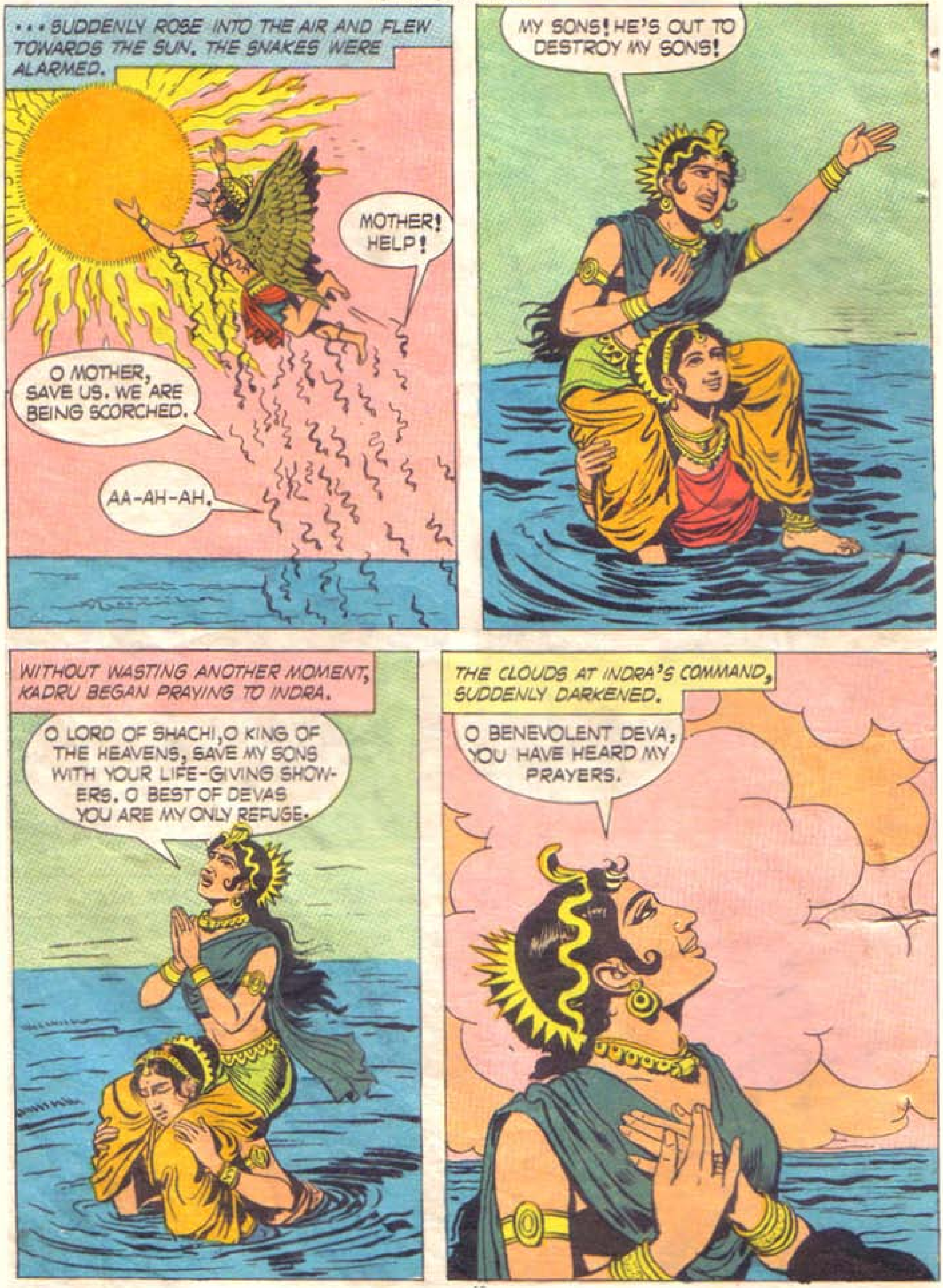

AND THE CHILD ASCENDED THE SKIES TO BECOME THE CHARIOTEER OF SURYA, THE SUN-GOD.
COME BACK, MY SON. DON'T LEAVE ME.
A FEW DAYS LATER, WHEN VINATA AND KADRU WERE OUT ONE EVENING, THEY SAW THE CELESTIAL STEED, UCHCHAISHRAVA, FLY PAST.
QUICK, VINATA, CAN YOU TELL ME THE COLOUR OF THAT HORSE?
IT IS WHITE ALL OVER. I CAN LAY A WAGER ON IT.
I THINK IT HAS A BLACK TAIL. I'M WILLING TO WAGER YOU MY FREEDOM ON THAT. YES, LET THE LOSER BECOME THE OTHER'S SLAVE!
WE'LL GO AND EXAMINE THE HORSE TOMORROW. LET'S GO HOME NOW.
KADRU HAD SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT THE BET.
COULD I BE WRONG? VINATA WAS VERY CONFIDENT. I MUST NOT BECOME HER SLAVE. I MUST MAKE THE HORSE'S TAIL APPEAR BLACK EVEN IF IT ISN'T.


WHEN THEY REACHED HOME, KADRU SENT FOR HER THOUSAND SONS.
GO, COVER THE TAIL OF THAT HORSE AND MAKE IT APPEAR BLACK. I MUST SAFE-GUARD MY FREEDOM.
WE'D BETTER OBEY OUR MOTHER.
IF WE DO, SHE MIGHT SHOW US SOME SPECIAL FAVOUR.
AND IF WE DON'T, SHE MIGHT BURN US ALL UP.
SO THEY SLITHERED OUT TO DO THEIR MOTHER'S BIDDING.
THE NEXT DAY, VINATA AND KADRU SET OUT TO SEE THE HORSE. ACROSS THE MIGHTY OCEAN THEY TRAVELLED...
...TO THE ABODE OF UCHCHAISHRAVA. THERE STOOD THE HORSE, SPOTLESSLY WHITE BUT...

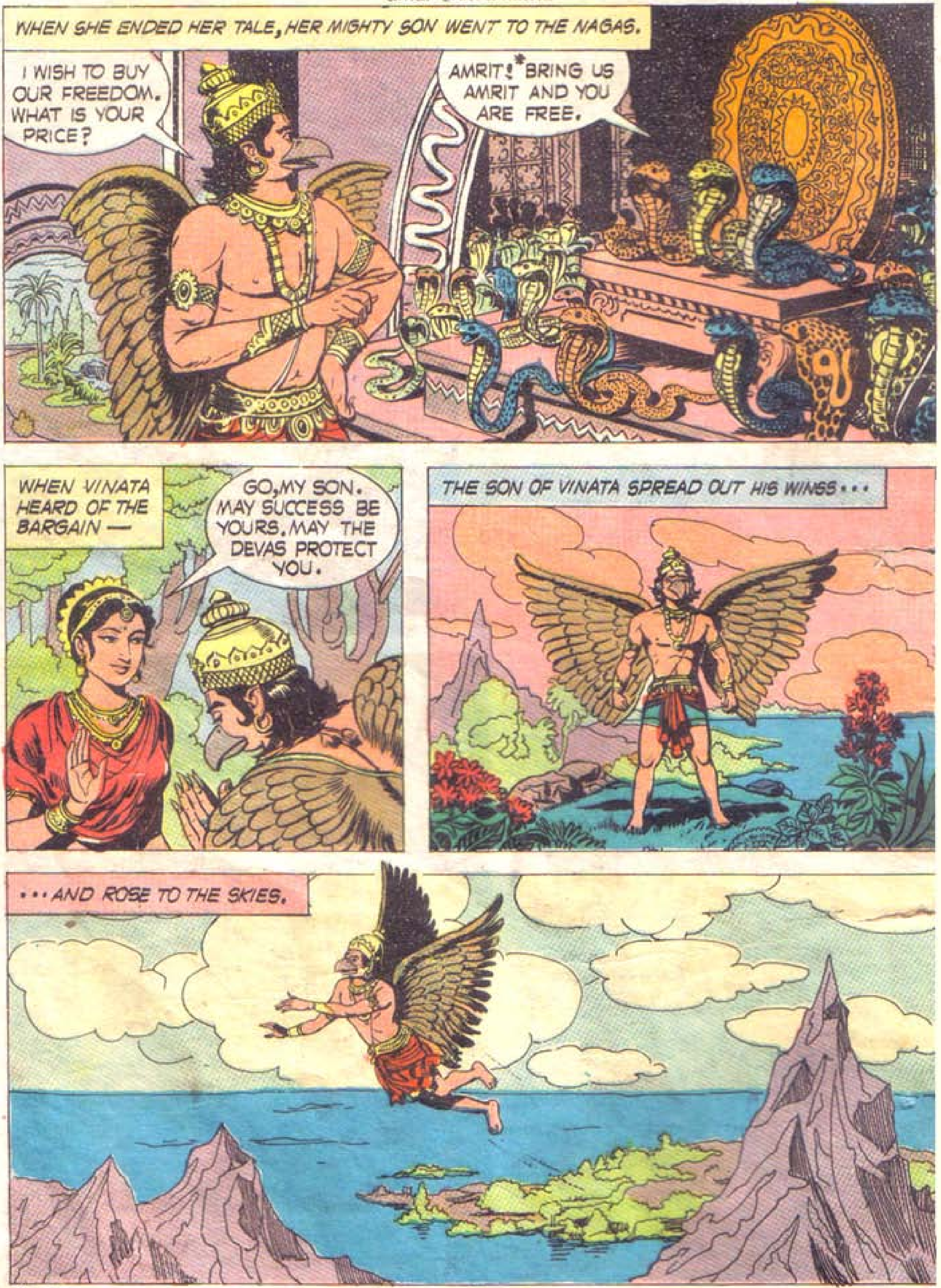


... ITS TAIL WAS BLACK. VINATA COULD NOT BELIEVE HER EYES.
IMPOSSIBLE! HOW COULD I BE MISTAKEN?
YOU DID NOT TAKE CARE TO ASCERTAIN THE FACT BEFORE MAKING THE WAGER. COME, MY SLAVE. YOU HAVE WORK TO DO.
MEANWHILE, AT HOME, VINATA'S SECOND SON BROKE HIS SHELL AND EMERGED INTO THE WORLD.
CAPABLE OF CHANGING HIS FORM AT WILL, HE INCREASED HIS SIZE ...
... AND SOARING INTO THE SKIES FLEW ACROSS THE OCEAN ...


...TO HIS MOTHER'S SIDE. VINATA SHED TEARS OF JOY WHEN SHE SAW HIM.
MOTHER!
AH! MY SON! MY POWERFUL SON. YOU SHALL RELIEVE ME OF MUCH OF MY BURDEN.
AT THAT MOMENT, KADRU CAME THERE WITH HER SONS.
O VINATA, MY SONS AND I WISH TO VISIT THE PLEASURE ISLAND OF THE NAGAS, IN THE MIDST OF THE OCEAN. TAKE US THERE.
VINATA TOOK KADRU ON HER SHOULDER AND TURNED TO HER SON.
DEAR ONE, PLEASE TAKE THE SNAKES ON YOUR BACK.
VINATA'S SON WAS PERPLEXED.
ARE WE THEIR SLAVES? WHY DOES MY MOTHER DE-MEAN HERSELF SO?
ENRAGED, HE INCREASED HIS SIZE...


...SUDDENLY ROSE INTO THE AIR AND FLEW TOWARDS THE SUN. THE SNAKES WERE ALARMED.
MOTHER! HELP!
O MOTHER, SAVE US. WE ARE BEING SCORCHED.
AA-AH-AH.
MY SONS! HE'S OUT TO DESTROY MY SONS!
WITHOUT WASTING ANOTHER MOMENT, KADRU BEGAN PRAYING TO INDRA.
O LORD OF SHACHI, O KING OF THE HEAVENS, SAVE MY SONS WITH YOUR LIFE-GIVING SHOWERS. O BEST OF DEVAS YOU ARE MY ONLY REFUGE.
THE CLOUDS AT INDRA'S COMMAND, SUDDENLY DARKENED.
O BENEVOLENT DEVA, YOU HAVE HEARD MY PRAYERS.

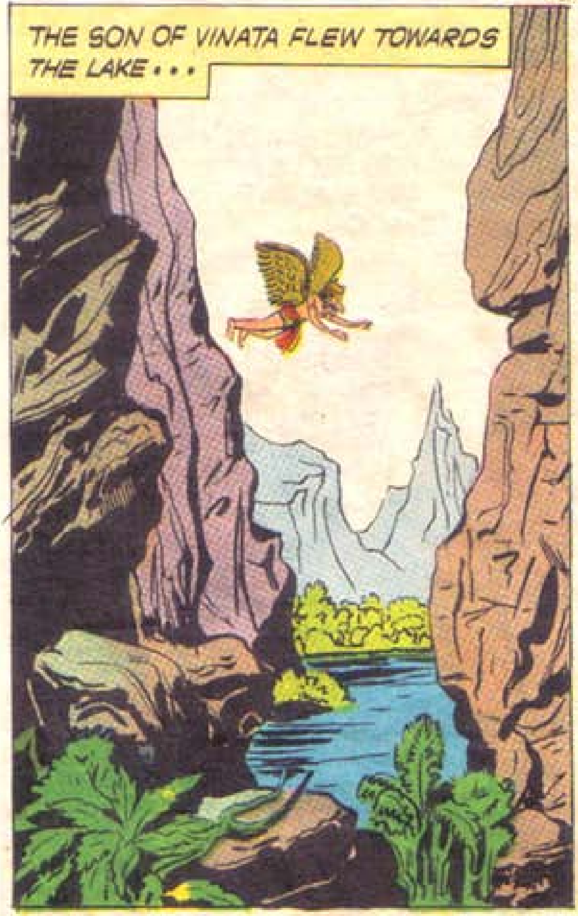

INDRA HAS FAVOURED THEM. I'LL DESCEND NOW AND TAKE THEM TO THE ISLAND.
KADRU HEAVED A SIGH OF RELIEF.
AH! THE SON OF VINATA IS FORCED TO DESCEND. MY SONS ARE SAFE.
COME, VINATA. BE QUICK. TAKE ME TO THE ISLAND. WE WILL AWAIT OUR SONS THERE.
LATER, ON THE ISLAND —
MY SONS, YOU ARE SAFE. COME. LET US EXPLORE THE ISLAND.
MOTHER, WHY MUST WE DO THE BIDDING OF THE SNAKES?
I WAS THE VICTIM OF THEIR DECEPTION. ONCE, BEFORE YOU WERE BORN...
AND VINATA TOLD HIM THE STORY ABOUT THE WAGER AND HOW SHE HAD LOST IT.



* THE NECTAR OF IMMORTALITY.



AS HE FLEW TOWARDS THE ABODE OF THE DEVAS, HE HEARD A VOICE.
MY SON, ARE YOU DOING WELL? HOW IS YOUR MOTHER?
IT WAS SAGE KASHYAP.
MY MOTHER IS WELL. SO AM I. I AM ON MY WAY TO SECURE AMRIT AND BUY OUR FREEDOM.
FATHER, WHERE CAN I FIND ENOUGH FOOD TO INCREASE MY ENERGY?
KASHYAP POINTED TO A LAKE IN THE DISTANCE.
DOWN THERE YOU WILL FIND A HUGE TORTOISE AND AN ELEPHANT. THEY ARE BENT ON KILLING EACH OTHER. EAT THEM AND PROCEED ON YOUR MISSION.
I SHALL DO AS YOU SAY, FATHER!


THE SON OF VINATA FLEW TOWARDS THE LAKE . . .


. . . SWOOPED DOWN ON THE ANIMALS . . .

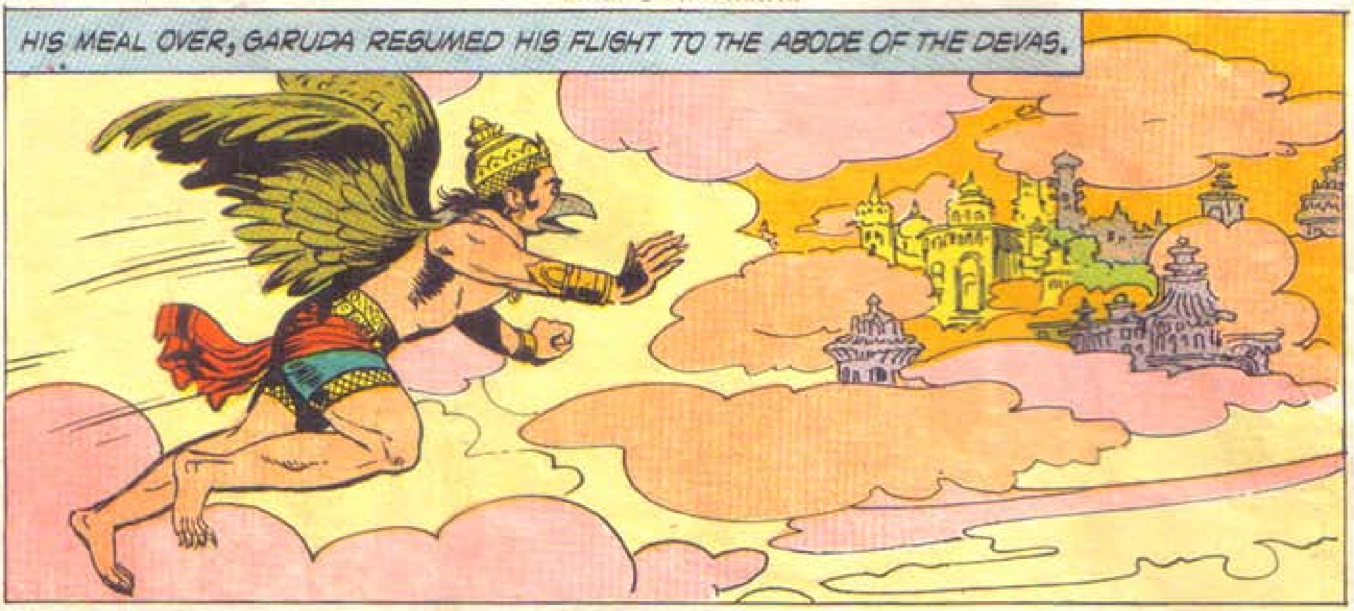

. . . AND SEIZING ONE IN EACH CLAW, SOARED INTO THE SKY.
I MUST FIND A STRONG TREE ON WHICH I CAN PERCH AND DEVOUR MY PREY.

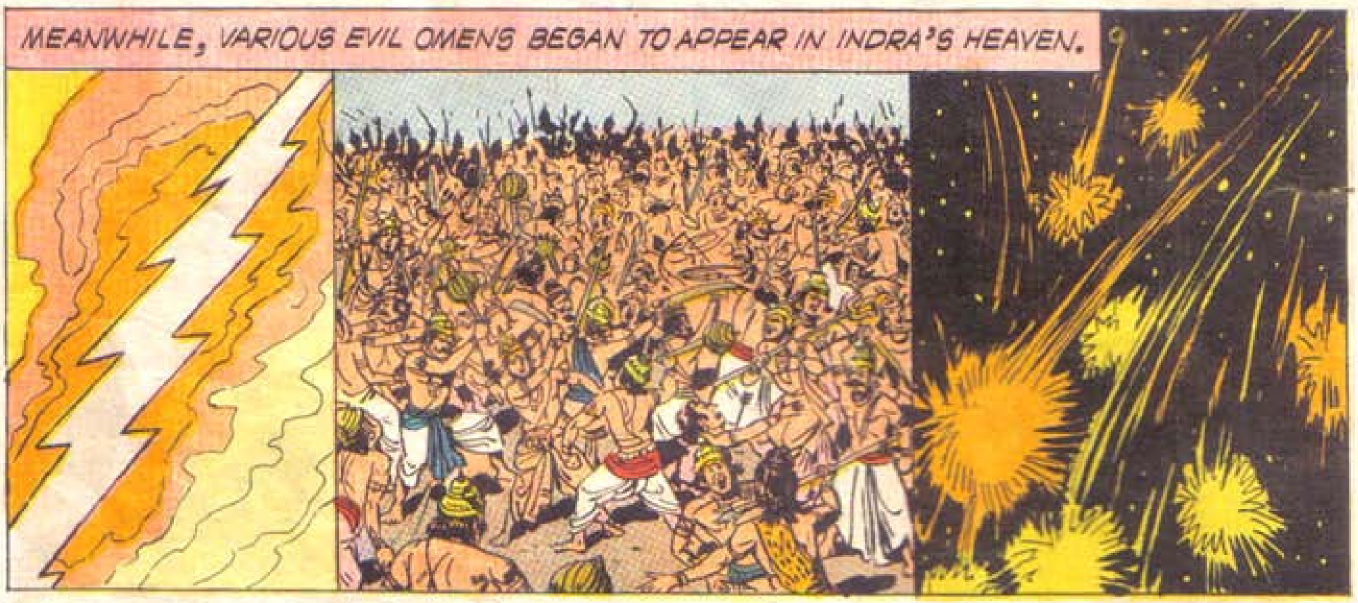

AT LAST, HE SAW AN OLD BANYAN TREE ON THE SEASHORE. IT BECKONED TO HIM WITH ITS BRANCHES.
O GREAT BIRD, COME AND SIT ON THIS STRONG ARM OF MINE AND ENJOY YOUR FEAST.
BUT ALAS! THE MOMENT THE GREAT BIRD ALIGHTED ON THE BRANCH...
... IT TREMBLED AND BROKE. THE MIGHTY SON OF VINATA LOOKED DOWN.
WHY! THERE ARE SOME RISHIS HANGING FROM IT. THEY MUST NOT BE HARMED.



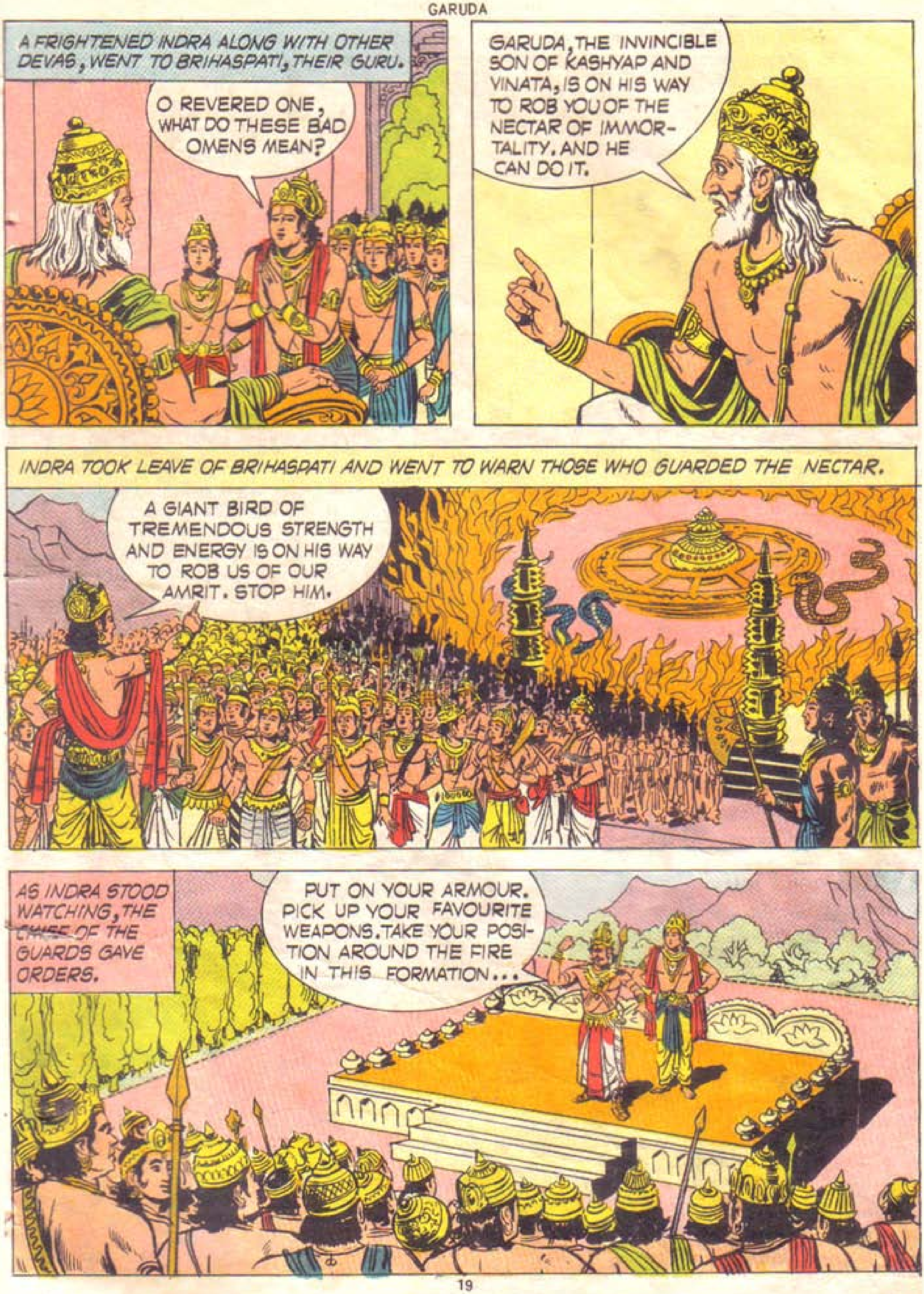
* ONE WHO IS CAPABLE OF CARRYING GREAT WEIGHT.

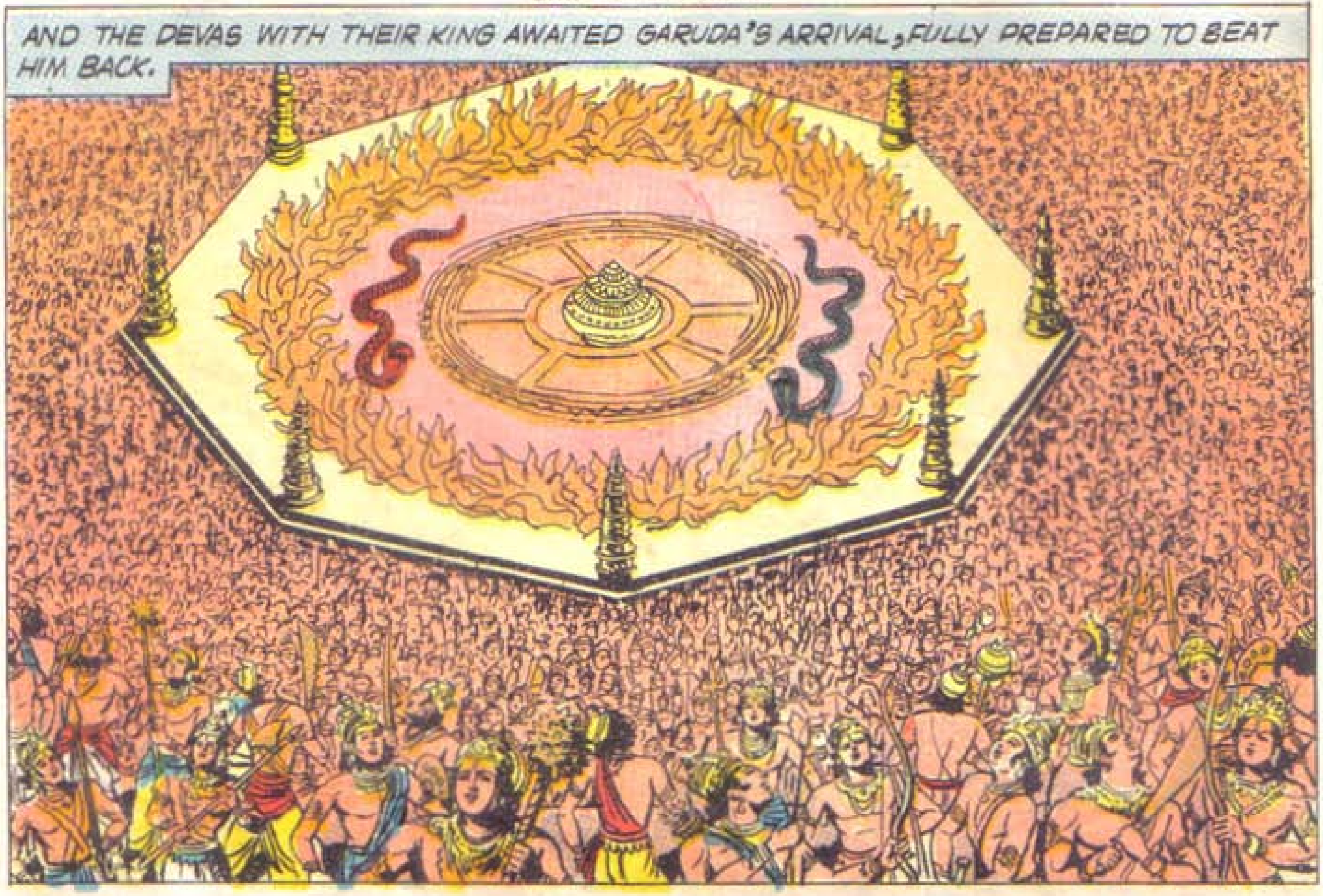

SUDDENLY —
AH ! THE PEAKS OF THE GANDHAMADANA MOUNTAINS.
AS SOON AS GARUDA LANDED, THE RISHIS LEFT THE BOUGH.
LET US GO TO THE HIMALAYAS AND PURSUE OUR VOCATION.
THEN, FLYING OVER AN UNINHABITED SUMMIT, GARUDA LET THE HUGE BRANCH FALL FROM HIS BEAK.
AT LAST! I CAN PERCH ON THAT PEAK AND EAT MY PREY IN PEACE.


HIS MEAL OVER, GARUDA RESUMED HIS FLIGHT TO THE ABODE OF THE DEVAS.


MEANWHILE, VARIOUS EVIL OMENS BEGAN TO APPEAR IN INDRA'S HEAVEN.


SUCH TERRIBLE THINGS HAD NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE—NOT
EVEN DURING THE FAMOUS WAR BETWEEN THE DEVAS AND ASURAS.


A FRIGHTENED INDRA ALONG WITH OTHER DEVAS, WENT TO BRIHASPATI, THEIR GURU.
O REVERED ONE, WHAT DO THESE BAD OMENS MEAN?
GARUDA, THE INVINCIBLE SON OF KASHYAP AND VINATA, IS ON HIS WAY TO ROB YOU OF THE NECTAR OF IMMORTALITY. AND HE CAN DO IT.
INDRA TOOK LEAVE OF BRIHASPATI AND WENT TO WARN THOSE WHO GUARDED THE NECTAR.
A GIANT BIRD OF TREMENDOUS STRENGTH AND ENERGY IS ON HIS WAY TO ROB US OF OUR AMRIT. STOP HIM.
AS INDRA STOOD WATCHING, THE CHIEF OF THE GUARDS GAVE ORDERS.
PUT ON YOUR ARMOUR. PICK UP YOUR FAVOURITE WEAPONS. TAKE YOUR POSITION AROUND THE FIRE IN THIS FORMATION...


AND THE DEVAS WITH THEIR KING AWAITED GARUDA'S ARRIVAL, FULLY PREPARED TO BEAT HIM BACK.


A FEW MINUTES LATER, GARUDA CAME. THE SKIES WERE DARK WITH THE DUST RAISED BY HIS FLAPPING WINGS.
COURAGE, MY DEVAS! FIGHT HIM!
BUT, LORD, WE CAN'T SEE HIM.
IT'S THE DUST. IT'S BLINDING US.


INDRA TURNED TO THE GOD OF THE WINDS.
O VAYU, DISPEL THIS SHOWER OF DUST! ABATE THE STORM! ONLY YOU CAN DO IT.
VAYU DREW IN HIS BREATH...
...AND WITH ONE LARGE PUFF BLEW AWAY THE DUST.
AH! THERE HE IS.
ATTACK HIM!
DON'T SPARE EVEN A SINGLE FEATHER!
AS GARUDA HOVERED ABOVE THEM, THE DEVAS ATTACKED HIM WITH THEIR DOUBLE-EDGED BROADSWORDS, SPIKED IRON MACES, POINTED LANCES AND MANY A DISCUS.


FOR A WHILE, GARUDA HUMOURED THE DEVAS AND LET THEIR WEAPONS GRAZE HIS BODY.


THEN WITH A MIGHTY ROAR HE ATTACKED.






OVERCOME BY THE ONSLAUGHT, THE DEVAS BEGAN TO FLEE IN ALL DIRECTIONS, THE BLOOD FLOWING COPIOUSLY FROM THEIR MANGLED BODIES.
OUR PRECEPTOR WAS RIGHT. THE MIGHTY BIRD IS INVINCIBLE.
A-AAH!
LET US FLEE WHILE WE CAN.
HAVING DEALT WITH THE DEVAS, GARUDA NOW HAD TO TACKLE THE WALL OF FIRE AROUND THE POT OF AMRIT.
THESE TERRIBLE FLAMES SEEM TO BE BENT ON BURNING SURYA HIMSELF. I WILL HAVE TO PUT THEM OUT BEFORE I VENTURE ANY FURTHER.
CAPABLE OF CHANGING HIS FORM AT WILL, GARUDA ASSUMED NINETY TIMES NINETY MOUTHS...
...FILLED THEM WITH THE WATERS OF SEVERAL RIVERS...


...AND SUBDUED THE WALL OF FIRE.
THEN WITH A ROAR OF TRIUMPH, HE RUSHED FORWARD THROUGH THE SMOKE...
...AND CAME TO A SUDDEN HALT. A REVOLVING WHEEL WITH A SHARP EDGE OF FINE, TEMPERED STEEL STOOD BETWEEN HIM AND THE POT OF AMRIT.


AS HIS GAZE FELL ON THE POT BELOW THE WHEEL, HE SAW TWO POISONOUS SERPENTS —THEIR TONGUES DARTING IN FURY, THEIR BLAZING EYES EVER WATCHFUL —STANDING GUARD OVER IT.
GARUDA WAS UNPERTURBED. IN AN INSTANT HE REDUCED HIS SIZE . . .
. . . SLID UNDER THE WHEEL . . .
. . . AND BEGAN FLAPPING HIS WINGS INCESSANTLY, THROWING UP DUST.


AND BEFORE THE BLINDED SERPENTS KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING, THEY WERE KILLED.
GARUDA THEN SNATCHED THE POT OF AMRIT AND . . .
. . . SUDDENLY BEGAN TO GROW — SHATTERING THE WHEEL INTO A MILLION PIECES WITH THE FORCE OF HIS ACTION.


WITH A CRY OF TRIUMPH, HE ROSE INTO THE SKY.


AS HE FLEW ALONG, VISHNU SAW HIM.
HIS ACT OF SELF-DENIAL PLEASES ME. HE HAS THE NECTAR OF IMMORTALITY IN HIS POSSESSION BUT HAS NOT TOUCHED A DROP OF IT. NOT EVEN THE DEVAS COULD HAVE RESISTED THE TEMPTATION.


O GREAT ONE, I WISH TO GRANT YOU TWO BOONS.
THEN LET ME BE ABOVE YOU. AND LET ME BE IMMORTAL AND EVER FREE FROM DISEASE.


SO BE IT. NOW PLEASE GO AND PERCH ON MY FLAGSTAFF.
AS SOON AS GARUDA SAT ON THE FLAGSTAFF —
EVEN SO WILL YOU SIT ABOVE ME.
GARUDA WAS PLEASED.
O GREAT ONE, I TOO SHALL GRANT YOU A BOON —
THEN BE MY VEHICLE, O MIGHTY GARUDA.
I WILL, AS SOON AS I FULFIL MY MISSION.
AFTER TAKING LEAVE OF VISHNU, AS THE ELATED GARUDA FLEW ON, INDRA WHO HAD CAUGHT HIM UP, HURLED HIS THUNDERBOLT AT HIM.


O KING OF THE DEVAS, YOUR MIGHTY WEAPON HAS NOT HARMED EVEN ONE OF MY FEATHERS.
INDRA WAS AMAZED.
O GREATEST OF BIRDS, I WANT TO KNOW THE LIMIT OF YOUR STRENGTH. I ALSO WANT ETERNAL FRIENDSHIP WITH YOU.
LET THERE BE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN US, AS YOU DESIRE. AND NOW THAT YOU ARE MY FRIEND, I'LL TELL YOU HOW STRONG I AM.
I CAN BEAR ON ONE OF MY FEATHERS, THIS EARTH WITH HER MOUNTAINS, FORESTS AND OCEANS AND YOU! MY STRENGTH IS SUCH THAT I CAN CARRY WITHOUT FATIGUE, ALL THE WORLDS PUT TOGETHER WITH THEIR ANIMATE AND INANIMATE OBJECTS.


INDRA WAS IMPRESSED.
ACCEPT MY SINCERE FRIENDSHIP. AND IF YOU HAVE NO USE FOR THE NECTAR— RETURN IT TO ME. THOSE TO WHOM YOU WISH TO GIVE IT WILL ALWAYS OPPOSE US.
I CANNOT RETURN THE NECTAR. BUT I CAN HELP YOU RETRIEVE IT.
AND GARUDA TOLD INDRA HOW HE COULD DO IT.
INDRA WAS PLEASED.
ACCEPT FROM ME ANY BOON THAT YOU WANT.
WASN'T MY MOTHER'S SLAVERY CAUSED BY THE DECEPTION OF TH WICKED SONS OF KADRU?
THEN HENCEFORTH LET SNAKES BECOME MY NATURAL FOOD.
SO BE IT, MY FRIEND.



AND GARUDA FLEW HOME.
HERE IS AMRIT FOR YOU. I WILL PLACE IT ON THIS KUSHA GRASS WHILE YOU GO FOR YOUR ABLUTIONS BEFORE TASTING IT.
LET MY MOTHER BECOME FREE FROM THIS MOMENT, AS I HAVE DONE YOUR BIDDING.
YOUR MOTHER IS FREE. WE WILL SOON BE BACK. YOU MAY GO.
AND THE SNAKES WENT FOR THEIR RITUALISTIC
AS PLANNED, IMMEDIATELY THEY LEFT THE SCENE, INDRA CAME THERE AND TOOK AWAY THE POT OF AMRIT.

YOUR FAN HAS A 5000-YEAR OLD HISTORY





Preservation